

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6-15, 17, 19, 20 and 22-26 are pending in the application upon entry of these amendments. Claims 1-3, 6-15, 17, 19, 20 and 22-26 have been amended herein, and claims 4, 5, 16, 18 and 21 have been canceled. Favorable reconsideration of the application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The invention title and abstract have been amended to address the Examiner's objections.

The preamble of claims 1-3, 6-15, 17, 19, 20 and 22-26 have been amended to refer to "a transfer endless belt device applied to an image forming apparatus, comprising" so as to be consistent with the amended title.

I. ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the noted allowability of claims 5-10 and 21-24. These claims will be in condition for allowance upon being amended to independent form.

Claims 1 and 11 have been amended to incorporate the features of allowable claim 5 (including claim 4 from which claim 5 depends). Consequently, claims 1 and 11, along with claims 2, 2, 6-10 and 12-14 which depend therefrom, should now be in condition for allowance.

II. OBJECTION TO CLAIMS 6, 11-24 AND 26

Claims 6, 11-24 and 26 are objected to based on the informalities noted on Page 2 of the Office Action.

Regarding claim 6, the Examiner indicates that there is no antecedent basis for the "first eccentric cam". The Examiner indicates that it is believed that claim 6 should depend from claim 5 rather than claim 4. Applicants agree with the Examiner,

and have made the appropriate corrections by amending claim 6 to depend from claim 1 which now includes the subject matter of both claims 4 and 5.

Regarding claim 11, the Examiner feels that reference to the "moving path" of the endless belt being made into one of a first through third path according to the type of image forming operation is awkward. The Examiner indicates that it is believed that the path of the endless belt is the same although the position or shape of the belt would change depending on the mode selected.

Applicants respectfully submit that claim 11 is definite in referring to the moving path of the endless belt being one of first through third paths according to the type of image forming operation. When viewed in physical space, the moving path, by virtue of the position or shape of the belt changing, would take on different physical paths. In other words, the belt will follow a different path by virtue of the shape of the belt changing.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the objections be withdrawn.

III. REJECTION OF CLAIMS 15-20 AND 25-26

Claims 15-19 remain rejected under 35 USC §102(b) based on Sakagami et al. Claims 20 and 25-26 remain rejected under 35 USC §103(a) based on Sakagami et al. in view of Hayashi et al. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of these rejections for at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 15 has been amended to recite further the features of the image transferring member supporting mechanism and the tension member being disposed within the moving path. The image transferring member supporting mechanism is latched to the tension member and includes a color image moving member for moving as a unit all image transferring members opposed to the image bearing members for color images. The tension member, moving in response to the image transferring member supporting mechanism, changes a shape of the moving

path of the endless belt into one of a first through a third path according to the type of image forming operation.

In rejecting claim 15, the Examiner notes that the tension roller 54 in Sakagami et al. is biased against the interior of the transfer belt and is associated with the supporting mechanism 57, cam 61 and spring 55. However, claim 15 as amended recites how "the image transferring member supporting mechanism is latched to the tension member." See, for example, the tension member 230 latched to the cam follower 224 portion of the image transferring member supporting mechanism as shown in Fig. 4 and discussed in paragraph [0060] of the present application.

In Sakagami et al., the supporting mechanism 57 is not latched to the tension roller 54. Rather, the supporting mechanism 57 and the tension roller 54 each engage the cam 61 independently. Thus, Sakagami et al. does not teach an image transferring supporting mechanism being latched to the tension member as recited in claim 15.

Amended claim 15 goes on to recite how the tension member moves in response to the image transferring member supporting mechanism (to which the tension member is latched). Sakagami et al. does not teach movement of the tension roller 54 in response to the supporting mechanism 57 as claimed. As previously noted, the tension roller 54 and the supporting mechanism 57 each independently engage the cam 61 and it is the cam 61 which imparts movement of the tension roller 54. Consequently, it cannot be said that the tension roller 54 moves in response to the supporting mechanism 57.

For at least these reasons, Sakagami et al. does not teach or suggest each and every feature of the invention as recited in amended claim 15. Moreover, Sakagami et al. does not teach or suggest the advantages of the claimed construction, such as less complexity, lower cost, etc.

The secondary reference of Hayashi et al. does not make up for the above-discussed deficiencies in Sakagami et al.

Applicants therefore respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

IV. CONCLUSION

Accordingly, all claims are believed to be allowable and the application is believed to be in condition for allowance. A prompt action to such end is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner feel that a telephone interview would be helpful to facilitate favorable prosecution of the above-identified application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Should a petition for an extension of time be necessary for the timely reply to the outstanding Office Action (or if such a petition has been made and an additional extension is necessary), petition is hereby made and the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees (including additional claim fees) to Deposit Account No. 18-0988.

Respectfully submitted,

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DATE: January 6, 2009

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